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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 175th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 6 February 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. PEREZ DE CUELLAR (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mrs. DIALLO (Senegal)

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Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.183/1991/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the Middle East conflict, the core of which was the question of Palestine, continued to defy a solution, in stark contrast to trends elsewhere in the world. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, caused by Iraq's intransigence and its refusal to comply with Security Council resolutions, seriously threatened the safety of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. In dealing with that crisis, the Security Council had taken decisions affecting the rights of the Palestinian people, although they fell short of opening the way for a durable solution to the problem of Palestine. Special recognition was due to the Secretary-General for his role in efforts to help the Palestinian people achieve its inalienable rights.

3. In 1990, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had continued to discharge its mandate successfully; it should now concentrate on reactivating the peace process in order to achieve a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine through the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East. In the meantime, the protection of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories remained of paramount importance.

4. Bearing in mind the achievements of the Committee under its Chairman, Mrs. Diallo (Senegal), his delegation proposed her re-election for another term, and further proposed the re-election of Mr. Alarcón de Quesada (Cuba) as Vice-Chairman and that of Mr. Borg Olivier (Malta) as Rapporteur.

5. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) seconded the nominations put forward by the representative of Yugoslavia.

6. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to re-elect the officers named by the representative of Yugoslavia.

7. It was so decided.

8. Mrs. Diallo (Senegal) took the Chair.

9. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the Byelorussian SSR as a new member of the Committee, to fill the vacancy brought about by the accession of the former German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany.

10. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that, on the occasion of the Committee's first meeting in an eventful year, he wished the members of the Committee, and observers,

(The Secretary-General)

every success and assured them of his full support in the discharge of the Committee's mandate, in accordance with the directives of the General Assembly.

11. The Committee's activities were designed to promote the universal recognition and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The importance of the Committee's role in that regard had been demonstrated by the fact that an overwhelming majority of Member States had voted to renew its mandate. That would enable it to continue its programme of work in the context of efforts by the international community to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

12. He offered the Chairman his congratulations on her re-election by acclamation to the chairmanship of what was an important committee. That was a measure of the Committee's high esteem for her leadership in the discharge of its important mandate, which called for perseverance and sustained efforts. He also wished to congratulate Ambassador Alarcón de Quesada on his re-election as Vice-Chairman and Ambassador Borg Olivier on his re-election as Rapporteur.

13. While all were, of course, currently preoccupied with the crisis in the Persian Gulf, attention must not be diverted from the question of Palestine, which was the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and affected millions of lives and scores of countries directly or indirectly. There was a wide measure of agreement within the international community that a just and lasting settlement of the conflict must be based on the following three conditions: withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab territories occupied since June 1967; acknowledgement of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and, lastly, a satisfactory solution of the Palestinian problem based on recognition of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. In that context, the question of Jerusalem remained of primary importance.

14. The situation in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip was a matter of serious concern to the international community. The mounting violence and resulting loss of life and injuries, the deportations and acts of repression had aggravated an already tragic situation. The Palestinian uprising, the intifadah, now in its fourth year, was evidence of the rejection by the Palestinian people of Israeli occupation.

15. In pursuance of Security Council resolution 672 of 12 October 1990, he had submitted to the Council on 31 October 1990 a report on the occupied territories which, among other things, contained his observations regarding steps which the international community might take to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians.

16. Having received his report, the Security Council, on 20 December 1990, had adopted resolution 681, in which, among other things, it had deplored the decision by Israel, the occupying Power, to resume the deportation of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. The Council had urged Israel to accept the de jure

(The Secretary-General)

applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to all the territories occupied by it since 1967 and had called upon the high contracting parties to the Convention to ensure respect by Israel, the occupying Power, for its obligations under the Convention.

17. By its resolution, the Council had also requested him, in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to develop further the idea expressed in his report of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the fourth Geneva Convention to discuss possible measures that might be taken by them under the Convention, and for that purpose to invite the parties to submit their views on how such a meeting could contribute to the goals of the Convention, and to report thereon to the Council. Moreover, the Council had requested him to monitor and observe the situation regarding Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation and to keep it regularly informed.

18. The protection of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation remained a matter of deep concern to the international community and he would as far as possible and within the means available to him, discharge the tasks that had been assigned to him. However, it remained his view that the implementation of such steps alone would not bring an end to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which was essentially political in nature and called for a negotiated solution.

19. It was therefore a matter of encouragement that, when it had adopted resolution 681 (1990), the Security Council had also, on 20 December, taken note of the statement made by the President of the Security Council that same day. In that statement, the members of the Security Council had reaffirmed their determination to support an active negotiating process, in which all the parties concerned should participate, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace which put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict through negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and taking into account the right to security of all States in the region, including Israel, and the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people. Further, the members of the Council had agreed that the convening, at an appropriate time, of a properly structured international conference should facilitate efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and lasting peace. However, they had been of the view that there was not unanimity as to when would be the appropriate time for such a conference. Lastly, the members of the Council had viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict as important and unique and as needing to be addressed independently, on its own merits. It was in that spirit that he had decided to appoint, in the coming weeks, a special representative for the Middle East to help launch an active negotiating process designed to promote peace in that region of the world. He would, of course, consult the parties concerned and the members of the Security Council before making a final choice.

20. The General Assembly, for its part, in its resolution 45/68 adopted on 6 December 1990 by an overwhelming majority, had called once again for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and had

(The Secretary-General)

requested him to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, to facilitate the convening of the Conference. The international community viewed the Middle East region as a whole as the most explosive region in the world. It also felt the paramount need to revive efforts aimed at ensuring a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the question of Palestine in particular, which was the core of the conflict and had brought and continued to bring immense suffering to both Palestinians and Israelis. He, for his part, would do all he could to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to him for convening an International Peace Conference on the Middle East and for achieving a just settlement of that long-standing dispute.

21. The Committee's efforts, since its establishment in 1975, had contributed significantly to heightening international awareness of the question of Palestine and to mobilizing Government and public support for a just solution of the problem. The Committee's programme of regional seminars, as well as non-governmental organization (NGO) symposia and international meetings, in which Palestinians, Israelis and experts from all parts of the world had been participating, had attracted wide attention, and it was encouraging to note that a number of Governments had extended political and material support to such events. Other activities which the Secretariat had undertaken, in consultation with and under the guidance of the Committee, such as the preparation of studies, monitoring reports and information bulletins, had also contributed significantly to a greater understanding of the question of Palestine.

22. As requested by the General Assembly, he would continue to provide the Committee with the necessary resources and assistance for the fulfilment of its mandate and for the implementation of its programme of work with the assistance of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that she viewed her re-election as an honour for her country, which was a firm defender of the cause of the Palestinian people. She thanked the Secretary-General for personally opening the Committee's first meeting of 1991, and paid tribute to his ceaseless efforts to help achieve a settlement of the question of Palestine.

24. The various seminars and symposia organized by the Committee in 1990 had increased public awareness of the need to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem. The participation of a number of Israeli political and trade union leaders had been welcome. The significant results achieved by the Committee would encourage it to redouble its efforts.

25. Nevertheless, the violence at the Haram al-Sharif, the steady deterioration of the situation of Palestinian civilians as a result of repeated violations of the fourth Geneva Convention and the tragic events in the Persian Gulf demonstrated that the Committee's goal was far from being achieved. The Committee therefore reaffirmed its determination to pursue and intensify its efforts to secure a peaceful, negotiated solution to the question of Palestine, which was the core of

(The Chairman)

the conflict which had been dividing the region for more than 40 years. The Committee would redouble its efforts to protect the Palestinian people from further injustice and enable it to exercise all its inalienable rights.

26. Recalling that the question of Palestine had been before the General Assembly since 1947 and before the Security Council since 1948, and that the Assembly had been calling for the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East since 1983, she expressed the hope that the international community would pursue a settlement of the Palestinian problem with the same zeal that it had shown for other causes, so that 1991, which had begun so tragically, might see the advent of peace in the region, with the final achievement of a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine that enabled the Palestinian people to regain its freedom and dignity in an independent Palestinian State that was recognized and respected by all.

27. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) attached great importance to the Committee's work both in and outside the United Nations. The General Assembly had shown its support consistently for the Committee, ever since it had adopted resolution 31/20 on the basis of the Committee's recommendations. The results of the Assembly's most recent session, which included a resolution supporting the cause of the intifadah, showed that the overwhelming majority of Member States supported the Palestinian people's struggle for the restoration of a Palestinian State that would include the city of Jerusalem, which was still under Israeli occupation. In particular, the General Assembly had recognized that a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict was necessary to achieve that goal, and had therefore reiterated its call for an International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

28. The situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories was a source of particular concern. The United Nations had introduced mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on that situation, and the Secretary-General had proposed that the Security Council should convene a meeting of the high contracting parties to the fourth Geneva Convention to discuss possible measures that might be taken by them under the Convention. The Committee could provide support and input for both those initiatives. It should also give priority to the strategic and legal implications of the systematic immigration of Soviet Jews into the occupied territories. Since the accessibility of information was vital to solving the Palestinian question, he proposed that a plan be adopted for creating a computerized compilation of all the resolutions issued to date on the subject. The work of the Department of Public Information was also essential in furthering the world community's understanding of the problem.

29. The war in the Persian Gulf should not divert attention from the plight of the Palestinian people, for the various long-standing problems in the region were the real source of the Gulf war. The world was witnessing the most massive destructive endeavour in modern history, as the American and British air forces, in approximately 50,000 sorties so far, dropped bombs whose aggregate explosive power was estimated to exceed that used in the entire Second World War. Such actions

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

clearly violated both moral principles and United Nations resolutions, which the United States of America was ostensibly defending. Although Palestinians had worked for a peaceful settlement of the crisis, they no longer had any choice but to side with Iraq. They would continue to call for a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful settlement of the conflict through the United Nations and its organs, particularly the Security Council. It was important that any such settlement should address the problems of the region as a whole.

30. It was also essential to focus on the crimes which Israel was perpetrating against Palestinians under cover of the current tragic events. For the past 22 days, a total and continuous curfew had been imposed on all Palestinians in the occupied territories. The curfew, which was still in effect, had led to untold suffering and economic deterioration. Israel's plans for the region were a matter of serious concern, and he was confident that the United Nations would act to protect the Palestinian people against Israel's machinations.

31. The Secretary-General withdrew.

32. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the statement by the Secretary-General confirmed the significance of the Committee's efforts to find a speedy solution to the Palestinian problem, which underlay the conflict in the Persian Gulf. The Committee had done useful work over the past year and had increased its authority among other United Nations bodies, as had been evident at the plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

33. His country's reaction to the recent outbreak of war had been to express the hope that Iraq would comply with Security Council resolutions by withdrawing its troops from Kuwait. The sooner Kuwait's sovereignty was restored and peace was established, the sooner energetic efforts for a Middle East settlement could be pursued. A meeting had been held at Moscow in January between the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs and representatives of the PLO to devise a plan for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait that would not aggravate the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR had also consulted with Iranian leaders the previous day concerning possible peace initiatives. Those meetings had reached the conclusion that the conflict could be settled only through peaceful means, with the participation of all those concerned, including the PLO, and through full utilization of the peace-making potential of the United Nations. Recent events had placed a particular responsibility on the Committee, and he was confident that the Committee would be able to contribute to the peace process and to a solution of the Palestinian problem.

34. Mr. BURAVKIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his country had consistently supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict and to the core issue of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. However, a Middle East settlement was still being blocked by Israel's occupation of Arab territories and by its refusal effectively to guarantee the human rights of Palestinians and to respect their right to independence. The recent tragic events in the occupied territories showed that Israel was using the occupation as an

(Mr. Buravkin, Byelorussian SSR)

illegal means of seizing land. He was hopeful that steps taken by the United Nations and the Security Council to solve the problem would prove effective, since the Security Council had already demonstrated its ability to reach a consensus on questions of international peace and security. It was clear that the majority of Member States felt that it was necessary to hold an International Peace Conference on the Middle East which would include representatives of the PLO. The Committee must work towards that goal by taking specific steps for the convening of such a conference.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

35. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Rapporteur) said the fact that resolutions on the question of Palestine had been adopted by overwhelming majorities at the most recent session of the General Assembly showed that the international community was determined to advance towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question. That should encourage the Committee to intensify its efforts in the coming year. The Committee would need to consider what activities it wished to undertake in 1991 in fulfilling its mandate, in the light of current developments in the region and the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. In particular, the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf should strengthen the Committee's resolve to achieve its objectives.

36. In order to facilitate the drafting of the Committee's programme of work for 1991, as well as other future deliberations of the Committee, he proposed that the open-ended Working Group should be re-established in accordance with past practice.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to re-establish the Working Group, with Mr. Borg Olivier (Malta) as Chairman and Mr. Jain (India) as Vice-Chairman.

38. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

39. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that she had received a letter dated 27 December 1990 from Mr. Paul Diamond, Director of the Accounts Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, concerning reimbursement of the travel expenses of Committee representatives attending regional seminars and NGO symposia and meetings held away from Headquarters. At its 171st and 173rd meetings, the Committee had stressed that when its members served on delegations to such meetings, they should enjoy the status of officials on special assignment for the Committee to promote the aims and objectives of the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. In his letter, Mr. Diamond informed the Committee that, following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 45/248 on the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, permanent representatives of Member States travelling on official business at United Nations expense would henceforth be authorized to travel business class.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 176th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 22 February 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALARCON DE QUESADA (Cuba)

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Adoption of the agenda

Visit by the President of the General Assembly to the occupied Palestinian territory

Report by the Rapporteur on the Preparatory Meeting for the North American NGO Symposium held in New York on 11 and 12 February 1991

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

VISIT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

2. Mr. de MARCO (President of the General Assembly) said that the idea of visiting the Palestinian refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory and Jordan was the result of talks with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The representatives of Israel and Jordan and the Permanent Observer of Palestine had welcomed the idea of the visit and the support provided, given the conditions prevailing in the region, had been excellent.

3. In a frank exchange of opinions with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel during the visit, he had addressed the human aspect of the Palestinian refugee problem and clearly explained the significance of pertinent United Nations resolutions, mentioning the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the principle of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967). He had also raised the question of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, which he believed should be convened without further delay.

4. The representatives of the Government of Israel believed that the United Nations resolutions did not reflect their position and that the idea of convening the International Conference was to put Israel in the dock. They said they were prepared to consider Israel's relations with all Arab countries without preconditions, but it appeared that no representatives of the Palestinian people would be included in the talks. He had repeated that it was not the purpose of the Conference to direct accusations at anyone, because all had made mistakes in the process, but to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people and secure frontiers for all countries of the region, including Israel. Accordingly, the Conference was the best guarantee available to Israel for a life in peace and security with its neighbours, including the Palestirian people.

5. His talks also covered the issues of emigration by Soviet Jews and the settlements, which were causing demographic changes contrary to the spirit of the United Nations resolutions, in territories not recognized by the Organization as a part of Israel. There was also discussion of the work of UNRWA and the conditions which it required for the fulfilment of its mandate. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel maintained that his Government was behaving most humanely and showing respect for international norms in matters relating to the occupied territories and emphasized, besides, that his country was the only democracy in the region. In that connection, it was pointed out to him that even the best occupation still constituted occupation.

(Mr. de Marco)

6. In response to questions from journalists during the visit about linkage between the situation in the occupied territories and the situation in Kuwait, he had replied that, although a parallel might be drawn, there was no linkage, because the occupation of Kuwait was not motivated by a desire to liberate the occupied Palestinian territory. The Israeli authorities, citing security reasons, did not allow a large number of journalists to accompany the visits to various UNRWA refugee camps, but the media were well represented on the visits to Gaza and the West Bank, despite the prevailing tension. Visits were arranged to injured and crippled children and adolescents in hospitals. Those living in the refugee camps complained vigorously of the difficult situation caused by the curfew, the closing of schools for long periods and the shut-down of most universities, as well as the demolition of homes in retaliation for throwing of stones by children.

7. Talks with the mayors of Bethlehem and Jerusalem showed they were dedicated to the cause of peace and yet realized that the situation was almost impossible and that the future of Israel, Palestine and Jordan depended on coexistence between the three States, which would have to work together in order to survive, finding a way of living side by side in their own independent countries. The situation was extremely difficult for men, and it was for that reason that Palestinian women were taking it upon themselves to maintain the spirit of defence of their people's rights. Jordan, for its part, despite the serious problems which it faced, was continuing to take in Palestinian refugees and to provide them with accommodation and education through the notable services of UNRWA. The Palestinians had said that they were eagerly awaiting the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and did not believe in violence as a solution. They said that United Nations support was confined to resolutions on paper and did not translate into action, because a double standard was adopted. An attempt was made to explain to them that a failure to support the work of the United Nations could be harmful to their cause. In any event, much care must be taken to avoid hasty, and possibly unjust, conclusions in respect of a people which had suffered for so long and had placed its faith in United Nations resolutions, despite the absence of results.

8. Prospects for peace in the region were not currently very encouraging. The United Nations should be much more attentive to the question of Palestine and the parties to the conflict should sit down at the negotiating table, because their positions were not entirely incompatible and could be reconciled. The solution was not to eliminate one of the peoples or States but to try and ensure that two Semitic peoples, each with its own national rights, could live in their own countries. It was a problem which concerned not only the Palestinian and Israeli peoples but each and every State Member of the United Nations.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that the information provided by the President of the General Assembly following his stay in the occupied Palestinian territory would undoubtedly enhance the work of the Committee and persuade Members of the United Nations of the need to devote greater attention to the question of Palestine.

10. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said the initiative of the President of the General Assembly in paying a personal visit to the occupied Palestinian territory had been very positive, because it had served to reaffirm the United Nations' responsibility towards Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian people in general, as well as in respect of the attainment of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty and the right to return. The visit was also concerned with the United Nations' obligation to protect Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation. The Committee should take further advantage of the valuable direct account by the President of the General Assembly and ensure that it was distributed more widely.

11. Mr. JAIN (India) said that, given the various events of recent years, the visit by the President of the General Assembly constituted a very important initiative, particularly because his account was given from a human point of view. His remarks on the situation in the occupied territories, the political thinking of the Israelis and the public opinion of Palestinians in the occupied territories were also of great value.

12. Mr. ELTCHENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the report of the President of the General Assembly on his visit to the occupied Palestinian territory reaffirmed the fact that the situation in that territory remained extremely tense. Of particular concern was the intensification of indiscriminate violence by the Israeli forces against the Palestinian population, particularly since the beginning of the Gulf war. In acting thus, Israel, as an occupying Power, was committing a flagrant violation of its legal obligation under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. It should recall the provisions of Security Council resolution 681 (1990) in which the Council urged the Government of Israel to accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the said Convention.

13. Recent events meant that the Committee was invested with a special responsibility. Any moment could see a further escalation of the conflict, which would have serious consequences for the whole Middle East region and for the world in general. It was urgently necessary that Kuwait should recover its sovereignty and that peace should be achieved in the Persian Gulf in order that efforts to solve the Middle East conflict might continue. A formula must be found to guarantee the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and to put an end to military activity. In that regard, the recent meeting between the President of the Soviet Union and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, the results of which would surely promote progress towards peace, was encouraging. It was extremely important that delegations should show moderation in order to avoid an intensification of the conflict and a continuation of the war.

14. The search for ways of ensuring a real peace process in the Middle East must continue, with participation by all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the PLO, and maximum use of United Nations potential, for example, by convening a Peace Conference on the Middle East under its auspices. All the countries

(Mr. Eltchenko, Ukrainian SSR)

concerned, and particularly States members of the Security Council, must not only help to find a rapid solution of the Gulf war but also join in the elaboration of an equitable security system, to cover both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine, in which the Governments of the region would play a decisive role.

15. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) said that the visit by the President of the General Assembly to the occupied Palestinian territory was of great importance by virtue not only of the position held by Mr. de Marco in the United Nations but also of the fact that he was the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of Malta, a country which had distinguished itself in its defence of the Palestinian cause and played a notable role as a centre for communication in the Mediterranean, as well as in the non-aligned framework. He associated himself with the request of other delegations that the statement by the President of the General Assembly should be distributed as an official document.

16. Mr. de MARCO (President of the General Assembly) urged the State of Israel, whose history was also filled with suffering, to appreciate and understand the sufferings which the Palestinian people was undergoing. The protection of the civilian population in Palestine was of enormous importance for Palestinians since, although UNRWA was providing all the humanitarian assistance at its disposal, that assistance could not match the help which ought to be provided by the international community in such circumstances. He had attempted in his report to provide an objective account of the situation, but the question of collective punishments was a real issue in the territories and made the Palestinians extremely worried about their future. It was not the business of the Committee to judge other countries but to ensure compliance with the Charter of the United Nations.

17. It was to be hoped that ways would be found as soon as possible to solve the Gulf question and to enable the implementation, through peace, of the Security Council resolutions. The question of Palestine in its entirety would also soon have to be confronted. Israel would have to play a part in that process, because whatever solution of that question might be identified in the context of a Peace Conference on the Middle East would also be in its interests. As soon as he had finished preparing the report on his visit, he would request that the document be distributed to members of the Committee.

18. The CHAIRMAN proposed, with a view to avoiding the duplication of work, that the report of the President of the General Assembly on his visit to the occupied Palestinian territory be published as an official document of the Committee, to be made available within the next few days.

19. It was so decided.

20. Mr. de Marco (President of the General Assembly) withdrew.

21. The meeting was suspended at 12.13 p.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

REPORT BY THE RAPPORTEUR ON THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM HELD IN NEW YORK ON 11 AND 12 FEBRUARY 1991

22. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the North American Co-ordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations (NACC) had produced a provisional programme for the Symposium, which was contained in Working Paper No. 1. The proposed programme was comprehensive: it addressed the impact on the Palestinian people of the current conflict in the region and encouraged the development of effective strategies by the non-governmental organizations concerned. Subject to approval by the Canadian authorities, the Symposium would be held from 28 to 30 June 1991 at Montreal.

23. The theme of the Symposium was "Palestine: protecting lives and promoting peace - the impact of the Gulf war". There would be a panel meeting on the first day, at which two panellists, one Israeli and one Palestinian, would be invited to make statements. There would also be other activities relating to various aspects of the question of Palestine, including a working session on the morning of the second day entitled "Palestine: responding to current developments". During the evening of the second day of the Symposium, there would also be a peace celebration, to be addressed by one keynote speaker invited by the non-governmental organizations. It was also proposed that 20 workshops should be arranged, divided into three groups, over the course of the two days. If it were not possible to hold the meeting at Montreal, the Symposium would be held in New York from 26 to 28 June 1991. The Bureau would keep the Committee informed in that regard.

24. Among the priorities of NACC during 1991 would be the encouragement of involvement by non-governmental organizations in efforts to achieve a peaceful solution of the current crisis in the Gulf; a continuation of the postcard and petition campaign calling on the United States to support the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices; a campaign for participation by the Governments of Canada and the United States in the development of strategies for protection of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory; and the dispatch of emergency delegations to report on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Coordinating Committee proposed that the first such delegation should be sent during the current month of February.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee approved in principle the provisional programme for the North American NGO Symposium contained in Working Paper No. 1.

26. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

27. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of members of the Committee, proposed that the representative of Qatar be welcomed to the deliberations of the Committee as an observer.

28. It was so decided.

29. Mr. AL-BAKER (Observer for Qatar) said that the world's preoccupation with the current Gulf crisis did not overshadow his country's deep interest in addressing the question of Palestine. The settlement of that question was the key to any solution of the problems of the region and the necessary prelude for stability, security and peace in the Middle East. For over 40 years the Palestinian people had been deprived of its natural and legitimate rights, despite the recognition of those rights by the international community and the efforts made to secure their enjoyment. His delegation appreciated the activities and programmes carried out by the Committee and followed with great interest its programme of work, which included seminars and symposia designed to familiarize public opinion throughout the world with the just cause of the Palestinian people, as well as studies prepared for that purpose and all the other measures required to ensure that the Palestinian people could enjoy the right to self-determination and live in dignity in its own independent State like other peoples of the world.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 177th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 8 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. DIALLO (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1991 (A/AC.183/1991/CRP.1/Rev.1)

2. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the draft programme of work for 1991, which had been put into final form at a meeting of the Working Group of the Committee on 11 March 1991, contained a new section concerning priority issues in the Committee's programme of work for 1991. That new section stressed the importance of the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the United Nations on the question of Palestine and the Middle East situation. It also stated that the activities of the Committee in 1991 should focus on the following: the International Peace Conference on the Middle East; the intifadah of the Palestinian people, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the need for international support and assistance; international protection of the Palestinian people under occupation; and the increasing Jewish immigration and Israel's settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

3. Section III of the draft programme of work for 1991 also included a new subsection entitled "Action by the Committee", in which it was stated that the Committee would, in addition to continuing its past activities, take an active role in all aspects relating to the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East and would initiate a process of interaction with all concerned for the regular exchange of information and views. Paragraph 16 offered suggestions on various activities to be undertaken by the Committee.

4. The remaining parts of the draft programme of work had been drawn up according to the format of previous years. Thus, subsections B and C of section III contained details on the regional seminars, the NGO symposia and the International NGO Meeting to be held in 1991. With regard to the Asian Regional Seminar and NGO Symposium, the Government of Cyprus had offered to provide a venue for that joint event at a convenient date. To hold the symposium and seminar at the end of 1991 would create budgetary difficulties and would coincide with the General Assembly session. Consequently, the most convenient date would be January 1992, which the Government of Cyprus also happened to prefer. If necessary, consideration would be given to the possibility of holding another regional seminar in Asia during the biennium. In addition, as indicated in paragraph 26 of the draft programme of work, the Committee had decided to accept the offer by the Austrian Government to have the European Regional Symposium and the International NGO Meeting held at the Austria Centre in Vienna.

5. In section III.D of the draft programme of work, on studies and publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights, it was stated that the

(Mr. Borg Olivier, Malta)

Division would prepare urgently and update regularly the compilation of the most recent statements and proposals regarding the peace process. The Department of Public Information was, furthermore, requested to prepare an attractive brochure on the International Peace Conference and the Division for Palestinian Rights was requested to study the feasibility of establishing a computerized database relating to the question of Palestine.

6. Subsection E of the document dealt with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The same format as in 1991 would be followed, subject to further consultations on ways to add to the impact and effectiveness of the commemoration.

7. He hoped that the draft programme of work would be adopted in the course of the meeting, so that the Division for Palestinian Rights could begin to put it into effect.

8. Mr. AKSIN (Turkey) noted that the Asian symposium and seminar, scheduled to be held in 1990, would be held, at the proposal of the Greek Cypriot Administration, in southern Cyprus in January 1992. He pointed out that the holding of those meetings in an area that was the subject of a dispute would have negative consequences on the process of negotiations that the Secretary-General was trying to promote. Furthermore, to organize the symposium and the seminar in southern Cyprus under United Nations auspices would be contrary to the obligation under Security Council resolution 649 (1990) to treat the two Cypriot communities as equals.

9. The Turkish Cypriot people, who were conducting talks with the Greek Cypriot people on the question of Cyprus, held the view that the Administration of southern Cyprus represented only the Greek Cypriots. Consequently, the organization of the symposium and the seminar in southern Cyprus would arouse indignation in Turkish Cypriot public opinion and cause a negative reaction on the part of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

10. Turkey did not recognize the Greek Cypriot Administration of southern Cyprus. That Administration could not legally claim to represent the two peoples of the island. As a result, Turkey would not participate in meetings held in southern Cyprus. Its position, obviously, could not be interpreted as a lack of support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

11. Mr. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he would not refer to the similarities between the occupied part of Cyprus and the occupied Palestinian territories. It was surprising that the representative of Turkey had used the terms that he had, although that was to be expected from a country that continued to occupy another country.

12. Turkey, on the other hand, did not object to the fact that a person who was presumably a representative of the Greek Cypriot authorities was participating in the Committee's meeting and introducing a report. Lastly,

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Turkey had the presumption to make a complaint against Cyprus when it was Cyprus that should complain about Turkey. He wished to draw attention to the fact that merely to allude to the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was a violation of Security Council resolution 550 (1984).

13. Mr. AKSIN (Turkey), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that since the actual situation in Cyprus was well known, he would refrain from responding to the statement of the representative of the Greek Cypriots.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work for 1991.

15. It was so decided.

REPORT ON THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND THE EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM, HELD IN GENEVA ON 25 AND 26 MARCH 1991

16. Mr. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus) said that he had participated in the Preparatory Meeting as a member of the Committee delegation and that the Meeting had also been attended by members of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP), including its Chairman, Dr. Don Betz. The membership of ICCP now included the five Chairmen of the Regional Coordinating Committees, which had served to highlight the concerns and approaches of the non-governmental organizations of various regions and strengthen the bonds between them and the international community of non-governmental organizations. The Meeting had also been attended by four representatives of non-governmental organizations from the occupied Palestinian territories, namely, Dr. Anis Al-Qaq, Dr. Umaiyeh Khammash, Mr. Zakaria Odeh and Ms. Doris Salah. Israeli non-governmental organizations had been represented by Mr. Latif Dori, Mr. Tawfig Zayyad and Mr. Amnon Zichroni. In accordance with the decision of the Committee, two special representatives of the European Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP) had also participated in the meeting and had assisted in formulating the draft programme for the Fifth European Symposium.

17. The members of ICCP and ECCP had met jointly and separately in order to elaborate draft programmes for the European Regional NGO Symposium and the International NGO Meeting to be held on 26 and 27 and from 28 to 30 August 1991, respectively. Working Papers Nos. 3 and 4 were the outcome of those deliberations. He recommended that the Committee should adopt those papers.

18. Referring to Working Paper No. 3, he pointed out that the draft programme of the Eighth United Nations International NGO Meeting proposed the establishment of three panels. Panel 1 would consider protection by the United Nations, United Nations resolutions and the situation from the Gulf to Palestine. Panel 2 would deal with the topic, Palestine update. Lastly, Panel 3 would discuss what had been been accomplished, what remained to be done and how to proceed in that regard.

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19. The programme provided for the organization of six workshops. The suggested topics for discussion were in accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group. In that connection, a request was made to invite a larger number of Palestinian NGO representatives to participate in order to establish and strengthen the channels of communication between the non-governmental organizations in the occupied Palestinian territories, United Nations bodies with assistance programmes for the Palestinian people and other non-governmental organizations with similar support programmes. He proposed that the Committee should adopt the provisional programme of that meeting, which included a list of panelists, on the understanding that additional names, if necessary, would be proposed to the Committee at a later stage for consideration.

20. Lastly, he conveyed to the Chairman the request by the non-governmental organizations that the Committee should seriously consider inviting to the opening session of the International NGO Meeting the eminent persons listed in Working Paper No. 3. Their presence would further underscore the urgency of the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which would also ensure the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objections, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt Working Paper Nos. 3 and 4.

22. It was so decided.

EUROPEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR, HELD IN MADRID ON 27-30 MAY 1991

23. The PRESIDENT, referring to Working Paper No. 5, which contained the programme of the European Regional Symposium on the Question of Palestine, pointed out that the document summarized the results of the steps taken by the Committee concerning the meeting. If she heard no objections, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt Working Paper No. 5.

24. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

25. The CHAIRMAN said that Working Paper No. 2 contained a list of non-governmental organizations which had declared their support for the goals of the symposia and meetings sponsored by the Committee and had requested invitations to future meetings. Since the list had already been adopted by the Working Group set up for that purpose by the Committee, she took it that the Committee wished to adopt Working Paper No. 2.

26. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the Committee's programme of work was an important contribution to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. With regard to the non-governmental

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organizations which had requested admission to the meetings of the Committee, he recalled that, although at the Committee's last meeting no objections had been raised in principle, it had been felt that more information should be obtained on some of those organizations. It had not been possible to do that in the short period of time that had transpired since then.

27. Referring to the report on the security of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, which was to be submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with Security Council resolution 681 (1990), he felt that the Committee could closely monitor that process through the Chairman. With regard to a political solution to the situation, he felt that the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Middle East had been a wise initiative. The Committee, through the Chairman or other members of the Bureau, could establish the necessary contacts, for example, by approaching the Special Representative of the Secretary-General when he was at Headquarters. With respect to the visit by the United States Secretary of State to the region, he said that the Palestine Liberation Organization had given instructions to high-ranking Palestinian officials living in the occupied territories to accept the invitation by the United States Administration to meet with Mr. Baker in Jerusalem. A decision had also been taken to change slightly the composition of the delegation which would participate in those meetings so that everyone could take part in those exchanges.

28. The PRESIDENT thanked the observer for Palestine for his observations and assured him that his suggestions would be kept in mind.

29. She said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt Working Paper No. 2.

30. It was so decided.

31. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no further matters for consideration, the meeting would be adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.